

St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Park Road, Smethwick, West Midlands B67 5HX

Inspection dates

5–6 March 2019

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Senior and middle leaders have established an infectious culture of high aspiration for all pupils. Their work to improve the school is restless, relentless and reflective. They are very well supported by other staff, who are unwavering in their commitment to all pupils achieving their very best.
- A rich and interesting curriculum, coupled with highly effective teaching, helps pupils to develop a real love of learning. Pupils thrive at the school. They are eager and respond enthusiastically to inspiring lessons. They make excellent progress across a wide range of subjects during their time at school.
- Pupils usually behave impeccably. They are courteous, kind and thoughtful. Their movement around the school is exemplary. Pupils enjoy school and the exciting opportunities it brings.
- Staff provide high levels of support and individual care for all pupils. Staff in the school know pupils very well and have built excellent and trusting relationships. Pupils are confident, safe and happy learners.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported very well and make excellent progress. Disadvantaged pupils usually do as well as other pupils in the school.
- Leaders have a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and the areas that could be better still. They are very active in checking on the quality of education being provided for pupils.
- Pupils achieve excellent outcomes. Most join school with levels of development broadly typical for their age. Pupils do very well in the phonics screening check and in their key stage 1 tests. By the time they leave Year 6, nearly all pupils achieve or exceed the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Some pupils in key stage 2 do not spell accurately enough when writing in foundation subjects.
- Leaders have worked hard to improve early years provision. It gives children a good start to their school life. Opportunities to learn outdoors are underdeveloped. In Reception, assessment is not used fully enough to plan next steps in learning.
- Governance is effective. An academy committee oversees the work of the school well. Its members use accurate and detailed information about pupils' well-being and performance to hold senior leaders to account.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of early years provision further by:
 - improving and using the outdoor play area more to make a greater contribution to children’s learning
 - ensuring that assessments of children’s progress in Reception are used to plan next steps in learning more fully.
- Ensure that all key stage 2 pupils use their very good knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar when writing in foundation subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The school is led extremely well. The headteacher's passion for pupils is infectious. She has established very high aspirations for staff and pupils. She is exceptionally well supported by other senior and middle leaders, who regularly review and reflect on practice in the school.
- The headteacher and other leaders are unremitting in their pursuit of high standards. Although they know that the school has many strengths, they are uncompromising in identifying those areas that could be better still. Monitoring of teaching and standards achieved by pupils is regular, supportive and insightful.
- Leaders are very well supported by the other staff in the school. They work hard and are enthusiastic about the school and their pupils' achievements. Staff in the school are unwavering in their commitment to pupils achieving their very best.
- Teachers are supported very well and are helped to develop in their careers. The climate they work in encourages them to innovate to help their pupils. Teachers are given ample opportunities to develop professionally. Where necessary, they are given very clear guidance about how they might improve their teaching.
- A rich and interesting curriculum helps pupils to develop a real love of learning. Pupils are taught all subjects of the national curriculum, for example studying humanities subjects and science to an impressive level of detail and depth. Pupils take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which complement the formal curriculum, including charity work, music clubs, trips, residential visits and sporting competitions.
- A strong ethos permeates the life of the school. It is very well characterised by the school motto, 'loving and learning', which reflects the strong emphasis placed on caring for individuals while achieving scholastic and wider success. The school is inclusive and promotes equality of opportunity very well. While it has distinctive and Catholic values, it welcomes pupils of all faiths and none.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is nurtured within and outside classrooms. Leaders ensure that pupils experience a wide range of activities, cultures and beliefs, which help to prepare them for life in modern Britain.
- Leadership of provision for pupils with SEND is very strong. Available resources are used effectively to ensure that these pupils achieve very well given their different starting points.
- Additional funding is used very well. Careful thought is given to how pupil premium and sports premium funding should be spent. The impact of this is evaluated regularly. Most disadvantaged pupils usually do as well as other pupils in the school. Pupils' fitness at the school has improved in recent years.
- Parents and carers speak very positively about the school. They believe that it helps their children to thrive. Occasionally, parents raise concerns about aspects of the school's work. When they do this, leaders respond by taking suitable action.

Governance of the school

- Governance is highly effective. The academy committee oversees the work of the school and its performance very well.
- Academy committee members have a variety of experience and skills, which they use to scrutinise detailed information about the pupils' well-being and performance. This helps them to hold senior leaders to account. They are very knowledgeable about the progress and test results of pupils.
- Committee members discharge their statutory responsibilities well, including for safeguarding. They have a strong understanding of safeguarding and receive regular training on it. They ensure that the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe are reviewed regularly.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding is very well led. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of sufficiently high quality.
- All staff are trained in safeguarding, including in keeping pupils safe from extremism. Leaders are aware of any local safeguarding issues, and staff are given specific training in these areas. Staff and pupils know what to do and whom to speak to if they have any concerns.
- Pupils are taught how to protect themselves in ways appropriate for their age. Pupils are helped to understand how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. Pupils say that bullying is very rare. If unkind behaviour does occur, then pupils say that it is dealt with quickly.
- Leaders act decisively to support any pupil who is at risk. Where needed, they make contact with external agencies and follow up any concerns resolutely.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Nearly all teachers have excellent subject knowledge and benefit from regular training. Inexperienced teachers rapidly become sufficiently expert in the different subjects they teach.
- Lessons are planned and sequenced very effectively. Teachers take care to ensure that pupils develop skills and grasp concepts securely before moving on to the next topic. Teachers give pupils ample opportunity to recall and practise what they have learned. Assessment is used effectively to identify where more work is needed or where pupils might tackle even harder work.
- Mathematics teaching is very effective. A recent review of mathematics teaching identified that some pupils needed to develop better mathematical reasoning and understanding. A programme of training for staff has helped to improve these areas.
- Reading is also taught very effectively. Most pupils quickly develop a love of reading. They benefit from access to a wide range of good-quality literary and other texts.

Additional help is given to pupils who struggle with reading. Phonics is taught to younger pupils very well.

- Pupils' learning is usually outstanding. Pupils work very hard and with great enthusiasm. Nearly all pupils take huge pride in their work. They work quickly, neatly and with evident enjoyment. Their exemplary attitudes to learning help them make the most of all opportunities in lessons.
- Many lessons are inspiring. They foster pupils' curiosity and build on pupils' prior learning. Teachers often give pupils opportunities to engage in thoughtful discussion. This helps pupils to think carefully and to live up to the very high expectations placed on them. Pupils are encouraged to persevere when faced with difficult work. Over time, they learn to master tricky skills and concepts.
- The rich curriculum helps pupils to develop a love of learning. Pupils are taught a wealth of interesting and useful knowledge across a wide range of subjects, which prepares them very well for the next stage of their education. In key stage 2, some pupils do not make enough use of their very good understanding of spelling, punctuation and grammar when writing in foundation subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Leaders and other staff take great care to promote pupils' personal development and well-being. Staff know individual pupils very well. They provide very high levels of care and personal support. They liaise effectively with other agencies if pupils need additional and external support. They offer regular information sessions, which help parents to support pupils at home. Relationships in the school are trusting, productive and positive.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and develop into confident, caring and considerate young people. Pupils learn to respect themselves and each other, including through learning about other cultures and traditions. They raise money for charity and take an interest in environmental and international issues. The school has won a well-recognised 'Rights Respecting Award'.
- Pupils usually have exemplary attitudes to learning. They are proud of their achievements inside and outside of lessons and talk eagerly about them. They understand the importance of keeping themselves healthy and safe, including through eating well and exercising regularly.
- Vulnerable pupils benefit from extensive support. The 'building blox' programme fosters positive attitudes in these pupils, building confidence and developing their emotional resilience.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are courteous, kind and thoughtful. They usually behave impeccably inside and outside of classrooms. They move safely and sensibly around the school's stairwells and often narrow corridors.
- Pupils are involved in setting school and classroom rules. They usually follow these without difficulty. Most pupils, including younger pupils, regulate their own behaviour very well. They rarely need any reminders. Very occasionally, pupils' exuberance can lead to them being a little noisy. However, they settle again very quickly when told to do so.
- Pupils attend school very regularly. Very many pupils have excellent levels of attendance. In the few instances of pupils' irregular attendance, leaders take effective action to improve it. Pupils arrive at school punctually each morning.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils usually achieve high standards in the end of key stage 2 tests. The proportions of pupils achieving the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 have been very high in recent years. Similarly, the proportions of pupils achieving greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics have been very high. In 2018, a few Year 6 pupils narrowly missed achieving greater depth in mathematics.
- Most pupils who sit the key stage 2 tests have been taught at the school since they began in Nursery or Reception classes. A few join the school having sat the end of key stage 1 tests at another school. In 2018, a small number of these pupils did not achieve the standards expected of them at the end of Year 6. Pupils routinely do very well in spelling, punctuation and grammar tests.
- Pupils do very well in the key stage 1 tests. A higher than average proportion of Year 2 pupils achieve or exceed the standards expected in reading, writing and mathematics. Key stage 1 test results have been consistently strong in recent years.
- Pupils read regularly and widely during their time at school. They develop into fluent and confident readers. Most have very good comprehension and infer meaning in a way appropriate for their age. Pupils do very well in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Nearly all pupils achieve the standards expected for their age.
- In mathematics, pupils have a very secure understanding of number. They handle routine mathematical tasks fluently and confidently. They are given ample opportunities to apply their learning in unfamiliar contexts and to solve word problems. As a result, they learn to reason very well.
- Many pupils achieve outstandingly well in the foundation subjects. A strong focus on teaching subject-specific knowledge helps pupils to learn and grasp detailed ideas and information in a thorough way.
- Pupils with SEND achieve equally well from their different starting points. They are often helped in lessons by additional adults and are not left behind. Disadvantaged pupils make progress broadly in line with that of other pupils in the school. Many disadvantaged pupils achieve standards as high as other pupils. Outcomes for pupils who speak English as an additional language are strong.

- Work in key stage 1 and key stage 2 pupils' books confirms that they are making outstanding progress from their various starting points across the different subjects.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, most children achieve well across the different areas of learning.

Early years provision

Good

- Most children enter the Nursery and Reception classes with levels of development that are broadly typical for their age. However, a minority of children have levels of development that are significantly below this. They make good progress across the different areas of learning during their time in the early years. By the time they leave Reception, most children are working at or above the level expected for their age.
- Children are helped to settle in well. Parents are encouraged to visit before their children start, and nearly all take part in induction days. Most parents are involved in assessing children when they first arrive. Regular communication between home and school keeps parents informed about their child's progress.
- Early years provision is well led. With the support of the headteacher, provision is being improved further, including by encouraging more learning through play.
- Children develop independence very well, adapting to routines and taking on some responsibility for tidying up after themselves.
- Safeguarding and the welfare of children are afforded high priority. Children feel safe and enjoy coming to school. They play and learn with concentration. They follow instructions and most are confident when speaking to adults. Adults carry out regular assessments of risks to children. All welfare requirements are met.
- Teaching is usually well planned. It blends teacher-led activities, small-group sessions and opportunities for children to explore on their own. Although assessment is frequent and used very well to guide next steps in the Nursery, it is used less effectively in Reception.
- Outdoor provision requires some improvement. Children do not have enough opportunities to learn outside. Some external resources fail to foster curiosity sufficiently. For example, the sample of containers used in the wet play area are not designed to help children develop mathematical understanding. Moreover, some instructions or guides to productive play are either missing, too small or situated at unhelpful heights.
- Children with SEND are cared for very well. With help, they take part in the range of different activities provided. Adults work specifically and effectively with those pupils who have very particular needs.

School details

Unique reference number	141924
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	10058522

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	258
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mrs Joyce Gardner
Headteacher	Mrs Krystyna Bickley
Telephone number	01214 294609
Website	www.st-gregorys.sandwell.sch.uk
Email address	krystyna.bickley@st-gregorys.sandwell.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 February 2018

Information about this school

- St Gregory's is an average-sized primary school for pupils aged 3 to 11. It is part of the Saint Catherine of Siena multi-academy company, which consists of four Catholic primary schools in Sandwell. An academy committee oversees the work of the school on behalf of the board of trustees.
- Although pupils at the school come from 19 different ethnic groups, the majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below average.
- Children in the early years attend the Nursery part time and the Reception class full time.
- A before- and after-school club operates at the school. It is not managed by the governing body. This private provision is inspected and reported upon separately.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited every class in the school to look at the work pupils were doing. They observed the behaviour and attitudes of pupils inside and outside classrooms. They spoke with groups of pupils at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of parents before and after school. They also interviewed senior staff, middle leaders, academy committee members and a representative of the diocese. They spoke with a school improvement partner.
- Inspectors scrutinised a large sample of pupils' books in each year across different subjects. They considered a range of other key documents, including information about safeguarding, pupils' welfare and pupils' progress.
- Inspectors took account of the 15 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, including 14 written comments. Inspectors also considered the 12 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 59 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Mike Cladingbowl, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Tracy Stone	Ofsted Inspector
Julie Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector

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M1 2WD

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